

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

June 10, 2014

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection has asserted that a “state of emergency” exists in Los Angeles County in our child welfare system. In response to this, they have suggested that all County departments involved with children be placed under the authority of an Executive Director of the Office of Child Protection, who would be overseen by an up-to 19 member Oversight Team to monitor the County’s progress in implementing the Commission’s 55 recommendations.

I disagree strongly with the notion that consolidating complex County departments under one person and adding yet another oversight entity will, to use the Blue Ribbon Commission’s terminology, end the state of emergency. I think that, if we were to embrace this model, it will have the opposite effect that the Commission intended and further delay any efforts for reform. There are tremendous fiscal and legal issues to consider, let alone whom the Board could conceivably hire for this centralized position. All of that will take a large amount of time and focus before even getting to address the Commission’s recommendations.

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MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

YAROSLAVSKY _____

ANTONOVICH _____

KNABE _____

I would rather we focused our energy, resources, and most importantly, our time, on fixing the problems brought to light. The essence of the report calls for action on what I think are very legitimate issues that have been prevalent for some time, most notably the poor support we give to relatives the Department places kids with, the need for more involvement from public health nurses in determining a child's welfare, and the lack of a robust way of sharing information between departments. I also believe that the Commission rightly points out that the public needs to have a better understanding about how we administer, fund and oversee child welfare programs, and I do think stakeholders outside of Board-appointed commissions need to offer some sort of formal input.

The Commission states that every day, 40 infants are reported as possible victims of abuse or neglect and thus enter a system of care that is, by all accounts, far from ideal. I agree with the diagnosis, but not the suggested cure. I believe that this Board should not establish an Office of Child Protection nor should it establish an Oversight Team, along the lines of what the Commission suggests. We do not need more bureaucracy and more boxes at the top of the organization chart to fix these problems. We need action - *now*.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Board:

Change the DCFS Strategic Plan to the Child Safety Strategic Plan and mandate that all Departments involved with serving children augment the Strategic Plan to align their operational goals towards protecting the safety and well-being of children involved in foster care or at highest risk of being involved in foster care.

Establish a permanent Child Safety Committee comprised of DCFS, DHS, DMH, DPH, DPSS and County Counsel that will meet on a monthly basis to determine how to implement solutions and enhancements to the child welfare system. The Committee will be led by the CEO, who will also provide staff support, with participation limited to Department Heads and their Chief Deputies. Up to 3 representatives from the Blue Ribbon Commission can participate in the workgroup as monitors and can include participation from First 5 Los Angeles and the Children's Court, as needed.

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The Child Safety Committee will put their initial focus on pressing issues identified by the Blue Ribbon Commission, including but not be limited to:

- Offering an immediate solution to the problem of data sharing among children-involved departments.
- Development of a plan to address the lack of kinship care support.
- Review of the BRC recommended “Florida model” and determine if implementation would conflict with the Katie A mandated casework the Department is currently implementing or enhance it.
- Development of understandable and effective benchmarks for success that are in alignment with state and federal benchmarks.
- Development of an efficient and accessible community input process.

The workgroup will report on its progress on a monthly basis to the Board of Supervisors.

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